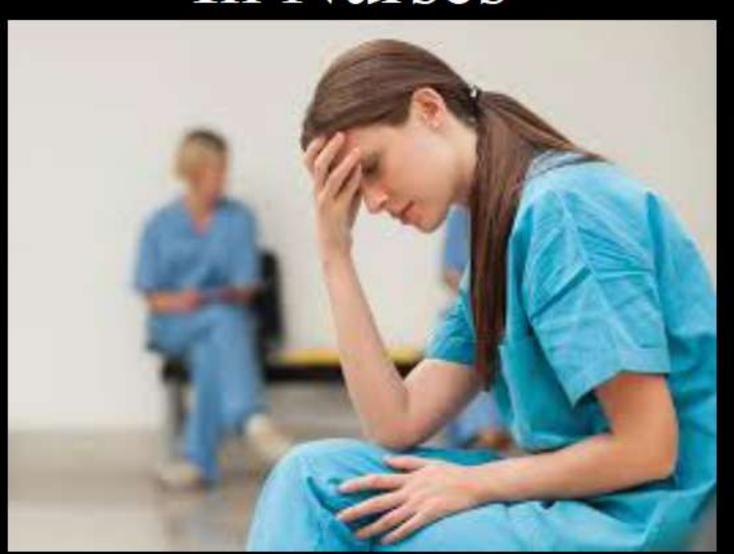
Moral Distress In Nurses



Definition of Moral

1. Concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour.

Concerned with or derived from the code of behaviour that is considered right or acceptable in a particular society.

Holding or manifesting high principles for proper conduct.



What is Moral Distress?

 Knowing the ethically right decision to take but <u>feeling</u> powerless to take that action.

Individuals moral integrity is seriously compromised.

Same as ethical dilemma?

Proof We Are Not Powerless

No matter your struggle, there is at least one thing you can do right now to begin to create change.



Who is susceptible?

- Nurses
- Doctors
- Students
- Social Workers
- Psychologists
- HCA
- Pharmacists
- OT/PT

Sources of Moral Distress

- Continued life support though it is not in best interest of patient
- Inadequate communication about end of life care between providers, patients and families
- Inappropriate use of healthcare resources
- Inadequate staffing or staff who are adequately trained to provide required care
- Inadequate pain relief provided to patients
- False hope given to patients and families.
- Clinical situation that is unnecessary or futile treatment
- Inadequate informed consent

Find a partner....

Share an experience of moral distress

- What was at stake for you?
 - What supported you?
- How have you made sense of it?

 New sources of Moral Distress have been identified during the Covid-19 pandemic....

Moral Distress and Covid-19

- Significant amongst all health professionals, especially nurses.
- Lack of knowledge and uncertainty regarding how to treat a new illness.
- Being overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of Covid-19.
- Fear of exposure to the virus leading to suboptimal care.
- Adopting a team model of nursing care that caused intra-professional tensions and miscommunications.
- Policies to reduce viral transmission that prevented nurses to assume their caring role (visitation policy and PPE policy).

- Practicing within crisis standards of care.
- Dealing with medical scarcity.

Nurses.....

- -Observation that nurses across all specialties in hospital setting have described experiencing moral distress when caring for patients.
- Similar themes of cause but differs slightly depending on setting and/or experience.

Recognising Moral Distress

- Often involves feelings of frustration and anger
- Feelings that threaten one's moral integrity.
- Often these feelings are not spoken about openly
- Complicating factor is that in any given situation, not everyone will be morally distressed.

Potential Consequences of Moral Distress

- Providers become morally numbed to ethically challenging situations
- May no longer recognise or engage in clinical situations requiring moral sensitivity
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout

Approaches to Reducing Moral Distress

•Four A's – ask, affirm, assess and act

Ask....

- Stage of self awareness and self reflection
- Am I, or members of my team feeling distressed, or showing signs of suffering?
- Have co-workers, friends, or family members noticed these signs and behaviours in me?
- Physical, Emotional, Behavioural, Spiritual

You become aware that moral distress is present

Affirm....

- Affirm you distress and your commitment to take care of yourself
- Validate your feelings and perceptions with others
- Affirm your professional responsibility to act

You make a commitment to address moral distress

Assess....

- Identify sources of distress
- Under what circumstances do the signs and symptoms occur?
- Do other people experience distress/suffering related to these sources?
- Assess your ability to make a change. Ask yourself, "What can I do personally? How can I contribute if this is organisation wide?
- Do a deep dive to understand the root causes of distress

Act.....

Take personal responsibility to try to implement the changes that you desire

- Address internal and external barriers
- Consider personal changes that will make you a more viable agent of change
- Develop a self care plan
- Identify appropriate sources of support
- Investigate outside resources for guidance

Strategies to reduce moral distress

- Speak up
- Be deliberate
- Be accountable
- Focus on changes in the work environment
- Participate in moral distress education
- Make it interdisciplinary
- Find root causes
- Develop polices

Strategies....

- Te Ara Whakapiri Last Days of Life Guidance
- Formal debriefing
- Continued education to junior medical staff
- Continued education to nursing staff in all settings
- Encourage ACP discussions in all settings

Self -Care

- Acknowledge and Understand Your Reactions.
- Be Aware and Monitor Your Wellbeing.
- Activate Your Parasympathetic Nervous System to Combat Stress.
- Take time for your mental health.

Acknowledge and Understand Your Reactions..

- Appreciate that you will have reactions, such as stress, anxiety, and grief, to the increased stressors you are encountering.
- Exercise self-compassion.

Be Aware and Monitor Your Wellbeing..

- Check in with yourself and monitor for the common physical and mental warning signs of extreme stress.
- Seek help if these symptoms impact your ability to provide care to your patients.

Activate Your Parasympathetic Nervous System to Combat Stress..

- Practice breath awareness.
- Eat regularly scheduled meals.
- Use a daily routine to prepare for bed in order to promote quality sleep.
- Try a mind-body practice like mindfulness or yoga.

Take Time for Your Mental Health...

- Create ongoing supportive connections with colleagues who can validate and normalise your experiences.
- Take a break from media coverage around Covid-19.
- Schedule time for self-care, such as talking with a friend, reading a book, journaling, or meditating.
- Seek out a friend or mental health professional to help ensure that you are acknowledging your extreme stress, processing it and have the support you need to manage the impacts over time.